

Message Text

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SUBJECT: RETIREMENT OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

CHAIRMAN HIGHLIGHTS MAY DAY FESTIVITIES

1. IN MAY DAY SPEECH IN TAMPERE 72 YEAR OLD RAFAEL PAASIO, CHAIRMAN OF FINNISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP), ANNOUNCED HE WOULD NOT STAND FOR REELECTION AT PARTY CONGRESS JUNE 5-8. PAASIO'S DECISION MAKES IT PRACTICALLY CERTAIN THAT PRESENT PARTY SECRETARY AND PRIME MINISTER KALEVI SORSA WILL BE NEW SDP CHAIRMAN. PAASIO SAID HE WAS MAKING DECISION PUBLIC NOW SO CONGRESS COULD FREELY EXERCISE ITS WILL IN CHOOSING SUCCESSOR. IN FACT, HOWEVER, SORSA'S PLEDGES OF SUPPORT ARE SO NUMEROUS THAT HE WILL PROBABLY BE ELECTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION.

2. IT IS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION WHO WILL SUCCEED SORSA AS SDP'S SECRETARY. A HOLF-DOZEN CANDIDATES ARE SEROUSLY MENTIONED, INCLUDING EDUCATION MINISTER ULF SUNDQVIST. RAPIDLY RISING, HOWEVER, INSPECULATION ABOUT THIS POST IN PAASIO'S SON,
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PERTTI PAASIO, WHO RECENTLY BECAME POLITICAL

SECRETARY TO SORSA AND ASSUMED A VACATED SEAT IN PARLIAMENT THIS MONTH. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARGUE FOR THE YOUNGER PAASIO, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT THAT THE SDP'S "PAASIO-SORSA LINE" WILL BECOME A "SORSA-PAASIO LINE".

3. TRADITION MAY DAY FESTIVITIES WERE HELD ALL OVER FINLAND IN GLORIOUS EARLY SPRING WEATHER. NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES EXPANDED PRACTICE OF ORGANIZING THEIR OWN POLITICAL RALLIES. BUT, APART FROM PAASIO'S ANNOUNCEMENT, THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT NEWS GENERATED BY THE SPEAKERS IN SOME 40 LOCATIONS AROUND FINLAND WAS A POTENTIAL CONFLICT OVER THE SHAPE OF THE NEXT NATIONWIDE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT. FINNISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (SAK) CHAIRMAN PEKKA OIVIO SAID CONTINUATION OF THE CENTRALIZED AGREEMENTS OF RECENT YEARS WAS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE WORKERS POSITION IN DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION. SULO PENTTILA, CHAIRMAN OF FINLAND'S LARGEST TRADE UNION -- THE METAL-WORKERS, ARGUED FOR UNION-LEVEL AGREEMENTS SAYING WORKERS FED UP WITH COMPLEXITY AND COMPROMISES OF CENTRALIZED SETTLEMENTS.
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